

Linkages to Learning News

Montgomery County, Maryland



Linkages to Learning, a Collaborative School-based Partnership among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public Schools, Public and Private Agencies, Families and Communities

Family Involvement Strengthens Communities

From its inception nine years ago, Linkages to Learning has depended upon parent and community participation. Since Linkages first began delivering services in 1993 in two school communities, the level and significance of family involvement has evolved and grown throughout the initiative, which now serves 21 schools.

As a community organization, Linkages not only helps families resolve the barriers they face but also encourages them to “give back,” using their many strengths and abilities to help their school, neighbors and others in need. Linkages has now formalized these long held practices by developing a three-tiered Family Involvement Plan that expands opportunities for parents to advance.

The journey for families begins as they meet with Linkages team members and establish reciprocal, trusting relationships. Linkages staff help parents address barriers to self-sufficiency and issues such as isolation, poor self esteem and lack of marketable skills. Other hurdles that interfere with community involvement, such as cultural and language issues, trust, availability of time and child care, are also confronted.

Civic engagement increases, as parents and other family members find ways to help others, improving their schools and communities. Linkages parents gain proficiency as they work with professionals and volunteers in small groups and classes, including adult literacy programs, women's and men's support groups, acculturation programs, parenting classes, and health promotion projects.

The Family Involvement Plan's three levels of engagement provide opportunities for professional growth while encouraging parents to serve in a volunteer capacity with Linkages or the school. Volunteers initially register with the Department of Health and Human Services, which provides liability protection. Linkages professionals train volunteers and provide ongoing supervision.



Alma Machado is volunteering in the Linkages Office at Summit Hall Elementary

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Women's Empowerment Groups Gain Momentum

Among its many outreach services, Linkages to Learning provides various support groups for children and parents. Several years ago, mothers at Highland Elementary School began participating in a "Women's Empowerment Group." The women's empowerment group idea has now branched out to other Linkages sites, including Summit Hall, Fox Chapel and Broad Acres.

The groups serve women of many ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and include participants who have faced physical and sexual abuse, hunger, poverty, frequent moves and substance abuse.

For women lacking awareness about legal remedies to protect their family and for those with limited English skills, a sense of isolation, despair, and depression may be present, increasing family stress.

The women's empowerment groups focus on reducing isolation by developing a system of social support to help members as they cope with these challenges. Through weekly meetings, group projects and “field-trips,” the women develop a network of friendships within their neighborhood.

Linkages' professional staff provide guidance, introducing new skills to improve individual and family situations. As their trust grows, the women begin to rely upon each other to help meet their own needs and those of their families.

Since 2000, groups of women have celebrated the personal growth they experienced through the women's empowerment groups by participating in a springtime retreat at the Rising Phoenix Center, located in the mountains of Western Maryland.

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**Look for our fall issue,
featuring Family Literacy**

Family Involvement Plan

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When the parent has completed 100 hours of volunteer service, he or she may become a "stipended volunteer" and receive a small payment for services. This second level requires five hours of service each week and provides the volunteer with additional training. After a three month commitment, stipended volunteers may seek employment as family service aide, an entry-level position on the Linkages team.

Ilene Sparber, HHS representative on Linkages resource team, explains "These volunteers are the backbone of their communities. Our family involvement plan borrows from 'best practices' developed by Head Start, Community Kids and other programs. There was no need to reinvent the wheel."

When asked what Linkages volunteers gain through the experience, Sparber replies "Stipended volunteers develop employment readiness and self-assurance as they take on significant projects. As they coordinate child care held during programs or organize evening classes, they often discover new talents." Sparber adds, "Family members who have gone on to become family service aides, with their excellent knowledge of the community and family advocacy skills, contribute greatly to the success of Linkages school-based teams and to their school communities."

Ana Schmitz, site coordinator at Summit Hall Elementary School, explains how Linkages volunteers assist staff. "Volunteers help our small staff with social and educational services. Some parents organize clothes closets or help

out with drives and holiday basket programs. Or, they may provide informal child care while other parents attend Linkages programs or assist in our acculturation groups and ESOL classes." Schmitz observes, "Some parents have transitioned from helping with Linkages to assisting school staff. And of course, special events, like Linkages to the Library and family nights, really depend upon the help of parent and family volunteers."



Parent volunteer Yolanda Delgado (right) lends a hand during lunch at Summit Hall Elementary

One Volunteer's Story

Margarita Escobar, parent at Summit Hall Elementary School, is one volunteer who initially came through Linkages' door for direct services. Schmitz notes "Margarita participated in many of Linkages programs, including an educational series that helps parents to understand how to work effectively with the school system and how to advocate for special education services. Later, she assisted with Linkages' English classes, helping other parents register. Escobar credits her daughter's teacher for sending her to Linkages.

"Before that, I didn't know anyone. First Ana told me about the Linkages Hispanic Education Group that meets every week, and I started to attend. I loved that group, and I started learning English here. Before we moved here, we lived in New York, and my daughter received special education there, but I didn't know why. Ana introduced me to a lady from the school who explained everything to me, and then I understood what this means for my daughter, and how I could help her. After that, I began volunteering in my children's classes."

Schmitz mentioned that Margarita recently spoke up at a meeting about the option for Summit Hall parents to transfer their child to another area school. "I was not in favor of this," said Escobar. "At our school, there are so many people who can help you. I am comfortable here and I feel I am a part of the school. The teachers and the principal, everybody encourages me."

"I just stop in the office and then I can go into my children's classrooms, and they let me in and I see what the teachers are doing. If Ana Schmitz hadn't called me, I would never have gone in to the school. And now, the teachers told me to apply to be a teacher's aide in Head Start. So I am going to go work in a school in Germantown!"

"At our school, there are so many people who can help you. I am comfortable here and I feel I am a part of the school."

Margarita Escobar,
Summit Hall Parent



County Leaders Keep Commitment to Linkages Expansion

Recognizing the important role that Linkages provides in delivering prevention and early intervention services to highly impacted communities, the County Executive and County Council continued their strong support of the Linkages to Learning Six Year Plan, which prioritizes schools for Linkages services and enhances services at existing sites.

Despite the recent economic downturn, Linkages maintained its budget and received increases for expanded services in the new fiscal year. Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan annualized funding at Pine Crest, Montgomery Knolls, Rolling Terrace Elementary Schools and Silver Spring Middle School, strengthening services at these newer sites.

The Council also provided funding to initiate a Linkages site at Maryvale Elementary School in Rockville and added a mental health counselor for Gaithersburg Elementary School's Bohrer Family Resource Center. A site coordinator position was added to the Broad Acres' Linkages team.

We are excited that the expansion to Maryvale means that a new service provider will join our existing cadre—The City of Rockville's Youth, Family and Community Services. We look forward to implementing this new site with our new partner agency. Plans have already begun with meetings with members of the school administration and an initial meeting to learn about the Maryvale community's assets and needs.

Women's Retreats: A Safe Passage



Linkages partner Reverend Margee Iddings, Rising Phoenix's executive director and founder, relaxes on the deck amidst the beautiful mountain view.

(continued from page 1)
Their initial participation was made possible through the generous support of Montgomery County author Sara Ban Breathnach and the Simple Abundance Foundation and through the in-kind support of Margee Iddings, the former counselor and pastor who established Rising Phoenix.

The groups enjoyed the relaxation and reflection so difficult to experience amidst the challenge of days and nights of hard work and parenting, while balancing competing demands of American and traditional cultures. The retreat's two-day structure allows time for deepened discussions about the needs and struggles of the women, revealing their hopes and dreams, and building their strength.

With Linkages supporting needed child care and arranging transportation, the women set off on what many describe as their first real "vacation." Communal meals provide a rare opportunity to be served by others, rather than having to serve

others and meet their demands. A hot tub under the stars replenishes the women's spirits, and offers a respite from daily schedules chock-full of physical demands.

At the retreat, hands-on activities are interwoven with therapeutic counseling, using the arts and the beautiful natural environment to connect with the women's thoughts and feelings, which are often painful. For women who are recent immigrants, the rural setting evokes memories of their home countries, creating opportunities to connect with past memories. When asked to think of a word to describe their experience at the retreat, some of the replies were: "unity, strength, welcoming, calmness, renewed strength, beauty, steps to progress, garden, and peaceful."

Yvonne Dodd, site coordinator at Highland recalls, "One woman, who had been struggling with depression for several years, was able to get in touch with her overwhelming grief due to the death of a child. Upon her return, she commented that she was finally able to return to her family as a better wife and mother. For many of Linkages participants, the retreat is a powerful experience."

As interest in offering women's empowerment groups has increased, the Linkages resource team is seeking additional funding. The two-day overnight experience, complete with meals, lodging, child-care, transportation, leadership and activities, costs approximately \$150 for each participant. Partners wishing to sponsor women for the 2003 retreat series are encouraged to contact Vivian Yao, Linkages Resource Team's private partner representative, at 240.777.1109.

VIPs Visit Linkages Sites



In May, child mental health leaders from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services visited the Linkages to Learning School-Based Health Center at Broad Acres E.S. and the Linkages program at Highland Elementary School. The visit was designed to describe Linkages to Learning's model of prevention which promotes the mental health of vulnerable children and families.

Members of the group included Anne Mathews-Younes, acting division director of the Center for Mental Health's Program Development, Special Populations and Projects and Nancy Davis and Gail Ritchie, public health advisors. Byron Conner, M.D., USN, of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences also was present. Dr. Conner is a fellow assigned to Carol Garvey, M.D., health officer for Montgomery County.

Participating Broad Acres staff included Marta Contreras, site coordinator, Neysa Dawkins, case manager, Ladys Lux, school nurse, Bob Evert, program director, Hope Freed, therapist and Huan Phan, family services aide. At Highland Elementary, Yvonne Dodd, Linkages site coordinator, discussed the Highland team's collaboration with school student services personnel with MCPS' Courtney Thompson, guidance counselor and Alice Tyler and Joanna

Donahue, parent outreach instructional assistants.

In a note to Linkages, Gail Ritchie said, "The visit made us appreciate that expanded school services can reach many children and families who have very difficult personal lives and little access to traditional services. The dedication and creativity of the Linkages partnership is powerful. You have helped three federal people feel very hopeful about what schools can do to help those in need."



Back Row. L to R: Ilene Sparber, Hope Freed Neysa Dawkins, Gail Ritchie, Anne Mathews Younes, Nancy Davis, Byron Conner. Front Row: Vivian Yao, Marta Contreras, Bob Evert. (Not pictured: Maricela Gonzalez, Ladys Lux, Huan Phan, Paul Scott and Sharon Strauss).

Closing the Digital Divide

Broad Acres' "Home Learning Centers" initiative continues to grow, with family and community members serving as stipended volunteers in the Linkages' computer lab. *Kim Nguyen, Tuan Nguyen and Yen-Dhu Dang* are assisting with training. Linkages family services aide *Huan Phan* coordinates the program, initially designed to instruct children needing after-school support.

When Linkages began distributing donated personal computers to Broad Acres' families, requests for computer training surged, as family members became more familiar with the technology. Volunteers *Steve and Katherine Newsome* worked with Linkages and community members to develop a

computer training curricula to meet families' needs. The result of this collaboration is an intra-family education model that encourages parents and children to spend time together while nurturing emerging community leaders.

Thanks to our many partners for donating over 100 computers to Linkages. We have found good use for them in the Linkages computer lab and in the homes of Broad Acres families. Partners include: *Katherine Kern, teacher at Broad Acres; Northrop Grumman; Montgomery College and Anne Warner; Holy Cross Hospital and Mr. Curtis; American Sociological Association and Carla Howery; MCPS and Steve Mikulski; Dr. and Mrs. Drago Smokvina;; Bethesda Regional Services Center and Alicia Beach of DHHS.*

Focusing on Volunteers at Summit Hall

On June 13th, Ana Schmitz, site coordinator at Summit Hall Elementary School, organized Linkages Appreciation Day, recognizing the outstanding contributions of 14 community partners, four community volunteers, 24 volunteer parents and seven donors. Partners received certificates and were honored at a luncheon, funded by the school's parent involvement program and local businesses. The program highlighted efforts of the entire school community to develop school, family and community partnerships that help students succeed academically and increase families' well-being.

A key step in achieving this goal was working closely with the PTA. Linkages staff participated in all PTA meetings and helped develop activities. Programs included a fall clothing drive that raised \$400 for the PTA and the school's first International Night, celebrating the school's rich cultural diversity through music, dance, table exhibits and food. Many Linkages' families participated, representing 12 countries.

Several agencies worked with the Linkages' Hispanic Women's Educational Group to help integrate families into school and community life. Workshops oriented parents to the American educational system, empowering them as the primary educators of their children.

The MCPS Parent Information and Training Center presented a series with topics ranging from promoting good study habits to understanding the special education process. The Family Services Agency's Project Family Outreach presented parenting workshops. And the Maryland Cooperative Extension offered a nutrition course.

Of the 36 women participating in the Hispanic Women's Educational group, 16 became active volunteers in the school's classrooms, office, health room and cafeteria, and in the Linkages program. Another successful collaboration, the Parents' Homework Club, was coordinated by Linkages staff and MCPS' ESOL Parent Outreach program.

The City of Gaithersburg sponsored 53 Summit Hall children for the City's youth summer program and supported Magnificent Mondays with weekly sports and recreational activities.

The Mighty Minds after-school tutoring program, coordinated by community service aide *Kathy Wilcox Moore*, served 42 Summit Hall students with the help of a core of Gaithersburg High School student and community volunteers recruited through the Volunteer Center's website. To celebrate the program, girl scouts *Megan Ball* and *Lauren Connelly* presented the children with end of the year theater workshops and donated props and games to the Mighty Minds program.



Summit Hall ES Appreciates Linkages' Volunteers and Partners at Recognition Event: Parent volunteers *David Escobar, Margarita Escobar, Carmen Perdomo, Edis Perez, Liliana Huacahe, Daisy Rivadeneira, Rosa Velasquez, and Stacey Warner-Welbon*, volunteer English tutor; Principal *Craig Logue* with *Karen Miller, Gaithersburg Public Library.*

Linkages Teams Meet New Challenges

Down-County

Broad Acres ES

- Karen Friedman, original member of University of Maryland's research team, has joined Pam Kay, University of Vermont, in the last stages of a two-year follow-up study investigating how students and families are functioning.
- Rev. Michael Bergen and volunteers from Grace International Christian Fellowship are leading English classes.
- Volunteers Martha Witebsky and Victor Dao are facilitating basic and advanced acculturation groups.

Greencastle ES and Banneker MS

- Site coordinator Nicki Sanders developed workshops and handbooks on Winter Survival, Stress Management, Money Management and Employment.
- Nicki participated in Career Day and the Black History Celebration at AME Zion Church.
- Susan Shewchuk, mental health counselor, and Nicki conducted a *Teen Talk* series for middle-schoolers.

Oak View ES and New Hampshire Estates ES

- Social skills groups began for 5th grade girls (self-esteem/managing stress) and for 2nd grade boys (friendship).
- Programs included student "lunch bunches" and morning coffees, computer, health and ESOL classes for parents
- A Health Fair was held for families in Silver Spring with fun activities and prevention resources, with depression screenings by Child Center & Adult Services, Inc.

Pine Crest ES and Montgomery Knolls ES

- Housing remains a major challenge; in one week, 10 families informed Linkages that their leases would not be renewed.
- Linkages matched a family with Friends in Action, a Community Ministries initiative.

Rolling Terrace ES

- Sofia Travella, mental health counselor, presented parenting workshops in Spanish and English using "1-2-3 Magic"
- Mercedes Moore and partners trained Latino parents from Rolling Terrace, Broad Acres and Highland as Health Promoters for World No Tobacco Day in May. They offered prevention information to over 1,000 individuals.

Mid-County

Harmony Hills ES and Viers Mill ES

- A celebration honored 10 volunteers who tutored 10 students needing extra academic support for the year.
- Both sites hosted spring Voices VS. Violence workshops and English classes

- 5th grade transition groups prepared students for middle school, addressing gang prevention, social skills, peer pressure, and study skills. The School Based Health Center at Harmony Hills hosted "Let's Talk" for parents of 5th graders.
- Robin Brannan, Viers Mill's mental health counselor, developed "Jump Start," a social skills group for children entering kindergarten before age five.

Highland ES

- Approximately 54 adults participated in seven multi-level ESOL classes for adults taught by volunteers.

Kennedy Cluster

- Two therapeutic groups were offered for students at Georgian Forest ES.
- Voices VS. Violence presented parent workshops on *Homework and Organizational Skills* and *Gangs and Warning Signs* at Georgian Forest ES.
- The Linkages team hosted an *Anger Management* presentation for Georgian Forest's PTA.
- Four families secured HOC housing through its lottery.

Parkland MS

- The team developed self-defense classes for girls and boys, art classes and a historical theatrical performance for 6th graders, "Women: Back to the Future," and pregnancy prevention programs for 7th and 8th graders with the Rockville Pregnancy Center.
- Case manager Clara Rodriguez organized a field-trip for 8th grade ESOL students to NIH's Library of Medicine.
- Parent services include English and computer classes and a Women's Empowerment Group.

Up-County

Fox Chapel ES

- Middle, high school, and adult volunteers were recognized for supporting the tutoring program, adult English classes and informal child care services. John Doyle, volunteer for the adult English classes received a special award.
- A bimonthly Women's Educational Support Group hosted 10 to 15 women at each meeting.
- Community volunteer Carlos Devis led a monthly parent workshop, "Problems and Opportunities to Grow."

Gaithersburg MS

- Case manager Alcira Colon and mental health counselor Cira Canelas began a Latina girls' acculturation group

Sally Ride ES

- Bruce Kirby, mental health counselor, is offering a summer transition group for 5th grade boys.



Summit Hall ES Appreciates Linkages' Volunteers and Partners at Recognition Event: Liliana Huacache, parent volunteer; America Caballero of Family Services Agency's Project Family Outreach with Ana Schmitz, site coordinator; Summit Hall student observes her mom as she's recognized.



Thanks to our Donors and Partners



COMCAST, for sponsoring Linkages to the Library at 7 schools and 6 Libraries, providing coordinators, bookbags, backpacks, t-shirts, refreshments and program supplies

First Book and Lynne Ganek, chair of Montgomery County's Local Advisory Board for First Book, for supporting Linkages to the Library

Beverly Jackson of the DC Head Start Collaboration and the DC First Book Advisory Board, for sharing books donated through Scholastic Books and Coca-Cola

Chris Collins Weinstein and USA Today, for donating hundreds of children's books for Linkages to Learning



Employees at Baskin Robbins in Kensington served "Free Scoops" to hundreds in May for First Books' fundraiser supporting Linkages to the Library. Ten Baskin Robbins stores in Montgomery County participated.

COMCAST, for providing tickets for 150 family members to attend an Edward Lear play and ice-cream reception at the Bethesda Academy for Performing Arts

DC United and the Colburn Foundation, for donating over 500 tickets for families to attend summer soccer games

Giant Food's Peapod & Eileen Strange, for donating \$1,100 worth of disposable diapers for Linkages families

Sangeeta Shah, for donating an IBM computer to help train Linkages students and families

Gwen Strike, for donating funds to help families in crisis

Temple Beth Ami, for donating car-seats, clothing, books, toys and cookies

Jerry and Karen Greenberg, for donating a computer and printer

Sharlene Matten, for donating a crib and bedding

John Kean, for donating funds to help a Harmony Hills family

Laura Long and the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, for donating dozens of new toys and art supplies for children at Broad Acres ES.

The Geneva Day School, for donating children's clothing and household items

Joanna Kling and Sarah Katz of the Leadership Training Institute at Kennedy High School, for donating dozens of books to be used in Linkages waiting rooms.

Kim Schifrin, Laura Cecala, Laura Miller, Sheryl Krongold, Dot Patterson Lin, Cheryl Haar, Debi Camel and other parents of Burning Tree ES PTA, for donating coats and mattresses

Hoover Middle School students and Ms. Beth Schroeder, for stocking Parkland MS's Food Pantry

Allen Chapel AME Zion Church, for sponsoring a Black History Celebration for Greencastle MS

The Bullis School, for providing food baskets for Oakview and New Hampshire Estates families

Congregation Har Shalom, for its coat and hat drive for Oakview and New Hampshire Estates families

Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church, for hosting the Giving Tree program, providing birthday dinners for Rolling Terrace parents

Samira Hussein, for hosting a Middle Eastern cultural awareness program for Kennedy Wheaton Youth Services, a program of the Mental Health Association

Kevin Chin, for donating a computer to a Viers Mill family

Deborah Barnes, parent volunteer, for organizing clothing donations for Kennedy Cluster families

Weis Market in Germantown, for donating food and supplies for Linkages volunteer recognition event at Fox Chapel ES

Manna Food in Rockville, for providing snacks for Linkages programs at Fox Chapel ES

Students from Seneca Valley HS and Martin Luther King, Jr. MS, for providing tutoring and child care services while Linkages parents attended English classes at Fox Chapel ES

Lourdes Chavez, parent volunteer, for helping the Women's Educational Group at Fox Chapel ES and parent volunteers Maria Ortega and Maria Torres, for preparing meals

Georgia Avenue Baptist Church, St. Peters Catholic Church, St. Jude's Catholic Church and Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, for assisting Kennedy Cluster families with unpaid bills for utilities and housing

Ross Hecht, J.D., for providing pro-bono legal representation for a Kennedy Cluster parent in a child support case

Bright Eyes Child Care Center, for providing Easter baskets for 21 Viers Mill children

Beverly Farms ES, for a coat and food drive for Linkages families in the Wheaton cluster

Eric Kafka and Dorothy Cartagena, for donating a computer to a Harmony Hills family

St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church, for donating funds to help a Harmony Hills family (continued. p. 7)



Thanks to our Donors and Partners



Broad Acres Hosts Health Fair

On April 21, 2002, partners from Holy Cross Hospital and the Washington Hebrew Congregation sponsored a health fair, coordinated by Ladys Lux, school community health nurse at Broad Acres School-Based Health Center. The event, focusing on nutrition and physical exercise, provided over 300 children and their parents with a wealth of information as well as many fun activities. Parents also had an opportunity to learn about the new kindergarten age requirements and to register children for the new school year.

Thanks to the many volunteers who joined Linkages staff Neysa Dawkins, Maricela Gonzalez, Bob Evert, Marta Contreras and Joan Glick at the event, and Wendy Friar from Holy Cross Hospital. Special thanks to the many volunteers from Washington Hebrew Congregation, who are adopting the Broad Acres School-based Health Center as an ongoing project.

Hats off to all of the Health Fair supporters and participants:

Mercedes Moore of DHHS' Substance Abuse and Prevention Services and the Multicultural Community Health Promoters, for supporting Smoking Cessation

Thibui Bui and Norma Quijada from the Cooperative Extension Service at University of Maryland, for helping participants to measure body fat and for demonstrating healthy cooking techniques

The Latino Health Initiative, for distributing kits to detect colorectal cancer

Bill Delaney from Fire and Rescue Services, for arranging to have an inflatable "Safe House" on-site, alerting parents and children to common fire hazards

Corporal Kerrey Dempsey of the Maryland National Capital Park Police, for promoting bicycle safety, and Kathy Wood, of DHHS' Public Health Services and Montgomery's Safe Kids Coalition, for donating helmets

Patrick Ocheni, for instructing children in "Kidsercize," with a Frisbee giveaway

Proyecto Salud, for screening participants for diabetes

Dental Health Services and the School-Based Health Center Multicultural Health Promoters for organizing an oral health screening with a toothbrush giveaway

Tina Palmer of the African American Health Initiative's Oral Health Coalition, for information about oral cancer risks

Cynthia Soto of the American Lung Association, for sharing information about asthma

Molly Magee of the Cardiac Enhancement Center, for sharing information about stroke assessment and prevention of heart disease

Nancy Collins of Montgomery County's Emergency Communications Center, for sponsoring a 911 simulator

Cynthia Johnson, for the carbon monoxide screening with a water bottle giveaway

Jeanine McGrath, a perinatal health educator, for sharing information about prenatal care, with a baby spoons giveaway

Santa Cante Wi Molina, for providing seated massages

Sheila Sims of Guest Services, for the "Mr. Germ" hand-washing experiment

Jan McCoy of Hospice and Home Care and Pat Kisiski of the OB-Gyn Clinic, for providing blood pressure screenings

Glenette Vaughan of Holy Cross Medical Center, for providing hearing screenings.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Weiss, for leading a "Getting Rid of Anger through Art" activity

DHHS' Community Health Services, for providing applications to help families access health care

Lourdes Sanchez of DHHS' Women's Cancer Control, for providing information

Emilie Crowne of Montgomery's Child Passenger Safety Initiative, for sharing information about safe car seats for infants and children



Participants at the Broad Acres Health Fair

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FINALLY, THANKS TO...

Reverend Joseph Clark, Sandy Boynton and the Church of the Ascension in Gaithersburg, for assisting Summit Hall ES families with emergency housing needs

Eileen Lorenz, principal, Linda Mayo, PTA president and the students and families at Travilah ES, for donating \$2,200 to help meet families' emergency needs at Summit Hall ES

Kathy Young, retired teacher at Summit Hall ES, for donating her retirement gift from colleagues to help meet families' emergency needs



Douglas M. Duncan, County Executive
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Linkages Partners Help Children See

Early on a Sunday morning in June, Linkages children and parents began arriving at Dr. Louis Espejo's optometrist's office on Rockville Pike. By noon, Dr. Espejo, his assistant Patricia Villatro, and Richard Pasternak and Anahid Marookhanian of Pearle Vision had provided 21 children with free eye exams and their first pair of eyeglasses.

Dr. Espejo originally contacted Linkages through Montgomery County's Volunteer and Community Service Center. Working in partnership with school nurses, Linkages staff identified children, contacted parents and arranged transportation.



Louis Espejo, O.D. and his assistants, receive a certificate of Appreciation from County Executive Douglas M. Duncan for their generous donation.

Opening Doors with Project Home

Linkages launched a new partnership with Project Home, a school readiness initiative with the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families, the Office of Early Childhood Services and the Montgomery County Home Visiting Association. During its first year, Project Home's early childhood home visitors provided intensive support to twelve targeted families in the Highland community, helping parents strengthen their skills as their child's first teacher.

Project Home's bilingual staff address parent concerns about child development, health and behavior and work closely with Highland's Linkages team, discussing the families' progress and needs. *Jennifer Simpson*, coordinator for Project Home notes "the collaboration appears to be mutually beneficial, as the home visit brings an in-depth understanding of family concerns to the Linkages team, who respond immediately, connecting families with resources and counseling."

Snail mail or e-mail? If you'd prefer receiving Linkages newsletter through the web, just forward your email address and we'll "e-lert" you when the fall edition arrives.
Contact: **cathy.hellmuth@co.mo.md.us**



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